

## “Don’t worry, they won’t bite.”



While that's true for the vast majority of dogs, even the cuddliest, fuzziest, sweetest pup can bite if provoked.

Unwisely, some owners actually promote aggression in their dogs as symbols of power.

From nips to bites to actual attacks, dog bites are a serious problem. Dog bite victims requiring medical attention in the United States number 500,000 to 1 million annually. Countless more bites go unreported and untreated. On average, about a dozen people die each year from dog bites.

Fortunately, there are steps we can take to address this problem.

### Who's being bitten?

Children make up more than 60 percent of all dog bite victims. The national Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates half of all children 12 and younger have been bitten by a dog.

The elderly and home service people - like mail carriers and meter readers - also are high on the list of frequent dog bite victims.

### What's a dog owner to do?

**Carefully consider your pet selection.** Before and after selection, your veterinarian is the best source for information about behavior and suitability.



**Make sure your pet is socialized** as a young puppy, so it feels at ease around people and other animals. Expose your puppy to a variety of situations a little at a time and under

controlled circumstances; continue that exposure on a regular basis as your dog gets older. If you're not sure how your dog will react to a large crowd or a busy street, be cautious. Don't put your dog in a position where it feels threatened or teased.

**Train your dog.** The basic commands "sit," "stay," "no" and "come" can be incorporated into fun activities, which build a bond of obedience and trust between pets and people. Don't play aggressive games like wrestling or tug-of-war with your dog.



**Keep your dog healthy.** Have your dog vaccinated against rabies and preventable infectious diseases. Parasite control is important to how your dog feels and behaves.

**Neuter your pet.** It's a fact:

Neutered dogs are less likely to bite. Be a responsible pet owner. License your dog with the community as required. Obey leash laws. Dogs are social animals; spending time with your pet is important. Dogs that are frequently left alone have a greater chance of developing behavior problems.

**Be alert.** Know your dog. You naturally would be alert to signs of illness, but you must also watch for signs your dog is uncomfortable or feeling aggressive.

### How can my family and I avoid being bitten?

Be cautious around strange dogs and treat your own pet with respect. Because children are the most frequent victims of dog bites, parents and caregivers should:

- **NEVER** leave a baby or small child alone with a dog.
- Be on the lookout for potentially dangerous situations.



-Start teaching young children - including toddlers - to be careful around pets.  
Children must be taught **NOT** to approach strange dogs. Children should be taught to ask permission from a dog's owner before petting the dog.

## Other tips that may prevent or stop a dog attack:

**Don't run past a dog.** Dogs naturally love to chase and catch things. Don't give them a reason to become excited or aggressive.

**Never disturb a dog that's caring for puppies, sleeping or eating.**

**If a dog approaches to sniff you - stay still.**

In most cases, the dog will go away when it determines you're not a threat.

**If you're threatened by a dog, remain calm.** Don't scream. If you say anything, speak calmly and firmly. Avoid eye contact. Try to stay still until the dog leaves, or back away slowly until the dog is out of sight. Don't turn and run.

**If you fall or are knocked to the ground, curl into a ball** with your hands over your head and neck. Protect your face.

## What should I do if my dog bites someone?

Even if the bite can be explained (perhaps someone stepped on the dog's tail), it's important to take responsibility for your dog's actions by taking these steps:

**Restrain the dog immediately.** Separate it from the scene of the attack. Confine it.

- **Check on the victim's condition.** Wash wounds with soap and water. Professional medical advice should be sought to evaluate the risk of rabies or other infections. Call 911 if paramedic response is required.
- **Provide important information:** your name

and address, and information about your dog's most recent rabies vaccination. If your dog does not have a current rabies vaccination, it may be necessary to quarantine it or even euthanize it for rabies testing. The person bitten may need to undergo rabies treatment.

- **Report the bite to your insurance company.**

**Comply with local ordinances** regarding the reporting of dog bites.

- **Consult your veterinarian** for advice about dog behavior that will help prevent similar problems in the future.

**IF YOU are the bite victim - treat wounds.**

- **If your own dog bit you,** confine it immediately and call your veterinarian to check your dog's vaccination records.
- **If someone else's dog bit you,** contact authorities and tell them everything you can about the dog: the owner's name, if you know it; color of the dog; size; where you saw it; if you've seen it before. These details may help animal-control officers locate the dog.

**Dogs are wonderful companions.** By acting responsibly, owners not only reduce the number of



dog bites, but also enhance the relationships they have with their dogs.

To learn more about the joys and responsibilities of pet ownership, contact your veterinarian or local veterinary association.

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